

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**ABOUT THE WATER BOARDS** Water is California's most precious resource, providing an essential lifeline between agriculture, industry, the environment and urban and rural interests throughout the state. With a growing population of more than 30 million and a limited supply of fresh water, the protection of water for beneficial uses is of paramount concern for all Californians. The State Water Resources Control Board (State Board) and the Regional Water Quality Control Boards (Regional Board) are responsible for protecting California's water resources.

*This Strategic Plan has been prepared jointly by the State Board and the Regional Boards. Throughout the Plan, the terms "we" and "our" refer to all the State and Regional Board members and staff, who are jointly responsible for implementing the Plan, monitoring results, and changing course as necessary to meet our goals and objectives.*

The State and Regional Boards work together to protect California's water resources. Created by the Dickey Water Pollution Act, the Regional Water Quality Control Boards have been responsible for protecting the surface, ground and coastal waters of their regions since 1949. In 1967, the State Water Rights Board and the State Water Quality Control Board were merged to create the State Water Resources Control Board, integrating water rights and water quality decision-making authority.

The nine Regional Boards are semi-autonomous and comprised of up to nine part-time Board members appointed by the Governor. Regional boundaries are based on watersheds. Together, the Regional Boards have over 1,000 staff members in 12 regional locations. Each Regional Board makes critical water quality decisions for its region. These decisions include setting standards, issuing waste discharge requirements, determining compliance with those requirements, and taking appropriate enforcement actions.

The State Board's role in protecting water quality includes setting statewide policy, coordinating and supporting the Regional Board efforts, and reviewing petitions contesting Regional Board actions. The State Board is also solely responsible for allocating surface water rights. Today, the State Board, with roughly 700 staff members, is organized into four divisions that address water quality, water rights, and administrative functions. These functions not only support the State Board, but also the nine Regional Boards. Five full-time Board members, appointed by the Governor, are responsible for setting statewide water policy.

**ABOUT OUR STRATEGIC PLAN** The State and Regional Boards completed a strategic plan in 1995 and revised it in 1997. We launched our current strategic planning process after the release of the Cal/EPA *Strategic Vision* in October 2000, using the Cal/EPA document and the previous strategic plan as reference points. We made a particular effort to ensure that our plan helps

achieve the goals of the *Strategic Vision* and the critical strategies therein such as pollution prevention. (See Appendix C for a description of how this plan supports the Cal/EPA *Strategic Vision*.) We conducted an extensive data gathering process to assess our organization's environment and identify the key strategic issues we must address over the next five years. The Plan updates our mission, vision, values, operating principles, goals, objectives, performance measures and key strategic projects (defined in Appendix A). Several of these components are highlighted below. The core of our strategy is highlighted by our six goals and the 27 key strategic projects, which serve as the implementation plan.

The purpose of this Strategic Plan is to highlight those new priorities that need to be addressed over the next five years. Consequently, the Plan does not focus on all of the many important and ongoing activities of the State and Regional Boards. This does not diminish the importance of these activities as they are equally essential to achieving our mission. We also recognize that full implementation of the Strategic Plan will likely require additional resources. The level of resources will be identified through the strategic projects and requested as part of the budget process.

**OUR VISION** A sustainable California made possible by clean water and water availability for both human uses and environmental resource protection.

**OUR MISSION** To preserve, enhance and restore the quality of California's water resources, and ensure their proper allocation and efficient use for the benefit of present and future generations.

**OUR VALUES** As we strive to realize our vision of the future, all our actions and efforts will be guided by a certain set of values:

- ◆ **Protection:** We are responsible for the protection of California's water resources.
- ◆ **Service:** We serve the public as a whole. Our job is to protect water for beneficial uses, and to ensure that pollution, misuse and overallocation do not impair those uses, now and in the future.
- ◆ **Integrity:** We continually earn the trust of those we serve, making an active commitment to truth, accuracy and fairness, including a commitment to environmental justice.
- ◆ **Leadership:** California strives to be a national and international leader in innovative approaches to water resource protection. We foster and recognize leadership actions at all levels of our organization.
- ◆ **Professionalism:** We are professionals committed to our mission and vision. We provide career development and professional growth opportunities for our staff.

**OUR GOALS** During our strategic planning process, we identified critical water resource issues to address over the next five years. These issues are presented in the next section. In order to address these issues, we have identified six goals that will help improve internal operations and specific program areas as well as improve efforts with external stakeholders. The six goals are listed below in no priority order:

**GOAL 1:** The Boards' organizations are effective, innovative and responsive

**GOAL 2:** Surface waters are safe for drinking, fishing, swimming, and support healthy ecosystems and other beneficial uses

**GOAL 3:** Groundwater is safe for drinking and other beneficial uses

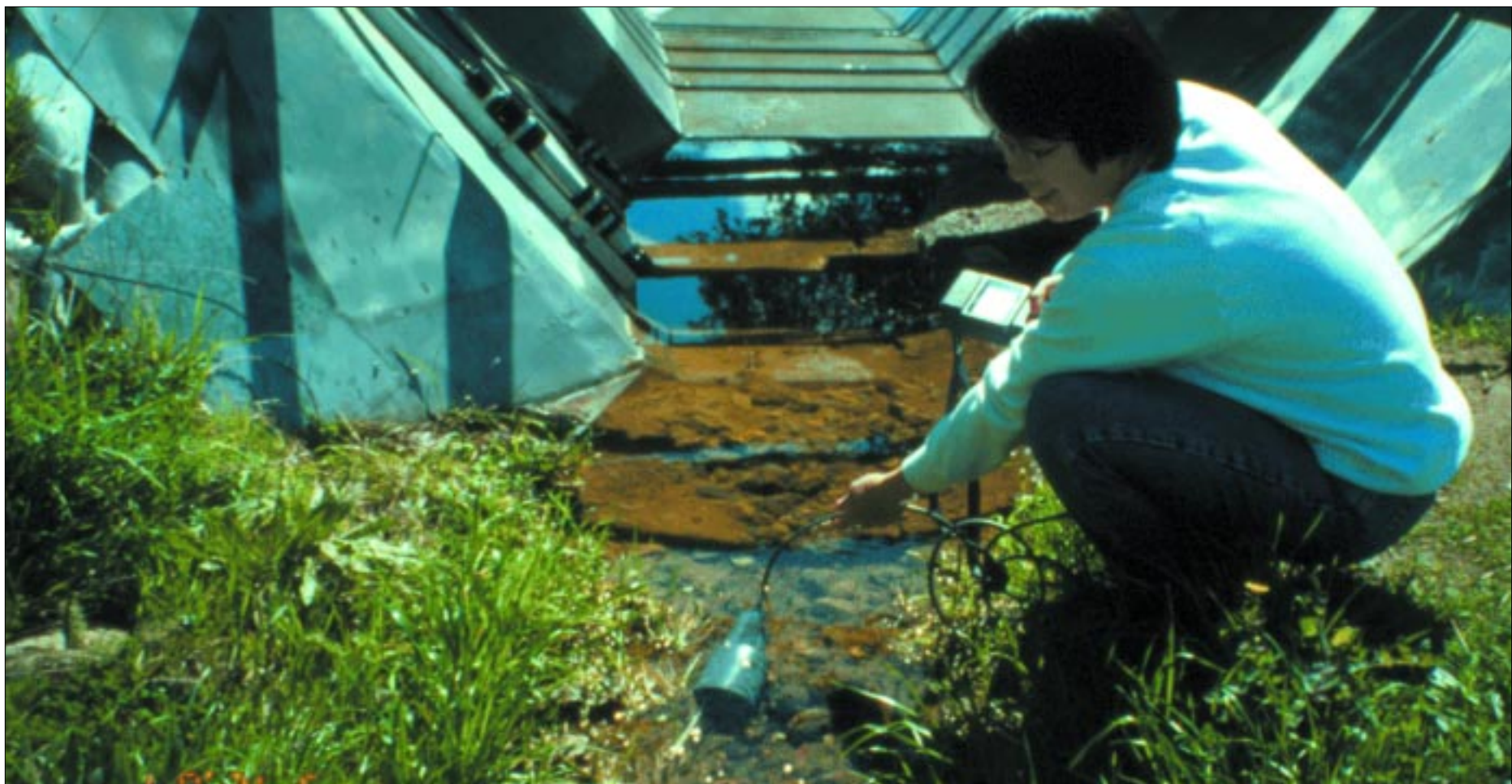
**GOAL 4:** Water resources are fairly and equitably used and allocated consistent with public trust

**GOAL 5:** Individuals and other stakeholders support our efforts and understand their role in contributing to water quality

**GOAL 6:** Water quality is comprehensively measured to evaluate protection and restoration efforts

**HOW WE WILL ACHIEVE OUR GOALS** To achieve these goals, we have established objectives, strategies, and most importantly, 27 key strategic projects. These key strategic projects, each with objectives and milestones, form the basis for implementing our Plan. We are targeting our resources on those critical areas that will likely produce the greatest gains for California's water resources.

**PERFORMANCE INDICATORS** We have established performance measures and targets to track our progress quarterly and annually. We will review this information to determine if we are meeting our goals or need to make changes in our approach. While some of these measures are not direct indicators of the state of our water resources, they provide a basis for assessing progress in the near term. As part of the implementation of Cal/EPA's *Strategic Vision*, we are developing long term environmental indicators as part of the Environmental Protection Indicators for California (EPIC) Project. Once developed, these indicators will be incorporated in future updates of the Strategic Plan. (See Appendix E for more details on the EPIC Project.)



*Collecting water quality samples at the Gambonini Mercury Mine weir. Lila Tang, Region 2*